

Module E, Section 1

Ethics & Professionalism

Professional Boundaries

To begin, read the following list of common place occurrences. As a professional, have you experienced any of following events and how have you handled them? Extra lines are included so that you can insert other situations that have caused you to question, adjust or cross a boundary. Check the column that best expresses what you would do when presented with the scenario. After the self-assessment, you will find a list of DO's and DON'Ts when it comes to establishing and maintaining your professional boundaries. We recommend that you print this worksheet for future reference.

Scenario	Absolutely Yes	Absolutely No	It Depends
Loan an employer a sweater when they are cold.			
Give an employer who is crying a hug from the side.			
Accept a \$.50 gift from an employer.			
Accept a \$5.00 gift from an employer.			
Give an employer a cigarette because they have run out of money to buy their own.			
Loan a dollar to an employer.			
Talk about your personal problems with your spouse with your employer.			
Allow an employer to kiss you on the cheek.			
Allow an employer to kiss you on the hand or arm.			
Kiss an employer on the cheek.			
Date an employer while you are providing services.			
Date an employer after you have stopped providing services.			
Other:			
Other:			

To Summarize

Support Brokers should realize that it is easy to say, "It depends". However, if you wait until a situation presents itself to decide how to handle it, your employer may be understandably confused (for example, going shopping with an employer and a request to borrow money comes up). In the event that you say no one time and yes another, again confusion is the result. Brokers must think ahead in order to be sensitive, appropriate and consistent.

DO'S & DON'TS

DO set your limits and keep them. Decide in advance how to handle issues such as:

- Loaning or borrowing money or things (i.e. cigarettes, books, CD's, DVD's, etc...)
- Making personal disclosures regarding intimate matters (i.e. bodily functions, sex, etc...)
- Engaging in phone calls that are not related to work issues (i.e. chatting or calls due to loneliness)
- Physical contact – how much is too much?

DO trust your feelings! If you think you might be doing something that is going to cause **confusion**, STOP and think or talk it through with a colleague.

DO maintain a circle of personal space. Again, remember that your actions could be confusing if you are inconsistent. Many individuals with disabilities have experienced abuse or inappropriateness with relationships. Be clear, be consistent and be professional.

DON'T manipulate, threaten or intimidate your employers or their support system. You are in a position of authority and you should never exploit this for your own gain.

DON'T assume that your employer or their Circle of Support know *where you are coming from* when it comes to boundaries. Explain!

DON'T think that you can't ask for help or advice. Other Support Brokers, Professional Advocates or the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare are all available to discuss a situation and troubleshoot with you.